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AH-JIH-LEE-HAH-NEH, A NAVAJO LEGEND.

BY GEORGE H. PEPPER.

(Told by Tom Logan at Ganado, Arizona, on September 20, 1904.)

ATSŌ'SI BAḠĀ'NI lived by himself. He was very poor and had no friends. When he had nothing to eat, he would go out to hunt birds, — the prairie-larks, Ja'dē Gḥō'e, which travel in pairs. These he would kill, that he might have food. When he had taken the larks to his home, he would pluck all of the feathers and down from them. He then procured small twigs of the grease-wood, and roasted the bodies before the fire in his feather hogan. These birds were his only food.

One day supernatural beings appeared to Atsō'si Bagā'ni. One of them was Hastse Yalti, the other the Sun. They told him that there were two maidens who did not want to marry. They talked with him for some time, and told him that they wanted him to make a journey to the town where the virgins lived, and endeavor to entice them from their home. The gods said that they would prepare him for the journey, and give him full instructions concerning his actions both on the trip and when he reached the town. They would first transform him into the form of a butterfly, and give him four skins of different kinds of birds, as he would have to pass through the towns where the birds lived, and would therefore have use for them. When he reached the homes or the village of a certain kind of bird (people), he was to put on the skin corresponding to those worn by the birds that he met. He was to follow this course in every town that he approached until he reached the home of the virgins, which was called Tōgehwī'tsḷō, a place southwest of Ganado, Ariz., which means "to make a line toward a river." The house itself was called Kīnna'halkai, which means "a white house in an inclosure." The gods told him that the birds living in the various towns near the home of the virgins were really guardians of the maidens, and acted as spies. When they saw a stranger travelling toward the town, they would immediately report to the chief men of the place, in order that they might guard the maidens more closely.

Atsō'si Bagā'ni made serious objections to the plans of the gods. He said that he was poor, devoid of the charms that would captivate beautiful young virgins such as these, and finally said that he was unworthy to make their acquaintance. The gods insisted four times, and the fourth time he accepted. When he decided to undertake the journey, the gods repeated their instructions concerning the power with which they would imbue him. After changing from a butterfly into the form of the first bird, he was to use his disguise until he reached the next town. There he was to change and put on the second bird-coat,

and, as he reached the other villages, the third and fourth coats. After passing the four bird towns, he was to render himself invisible; and from that point a rainbow would start whose opposite end rested upon the roof of the house in which the virgins dwelt. "Render yourself invisible," said the gods, "and travel over this rainbow-road, and you will reach the opening in the roof which leads to the room in which the virgins are imprisoned."

Atsō'si Bagā'ni started on his journey in the disguise of a butterfly, and did as he was told. As he approached the bird villages, he put on the appropriate feather coat and became a bird. He passed through all of the bird villages without causing suspicion, reached and crossed safely over the rainbow, and finally found himself on the roof of the house whereon the rainbow rested. Here he assumed the form of a butterfly. Through the opening in the roof a ladder protruded. To this the butterfly flew. When he reached this point, he acted as though he had just emerged from the cocoon. He held his wings in a drooping position, and crawled and endeavored to fly, but could not. He half fluttered, half fell to the bottom of the ladder. It was now the time when the sun was in the centre of the sky. In falling he dropped into the shade. The virgins saw him when he first appeared on the edge of the opening in the roof. They were working on blankets at the time, but, as soon as they saw him, stopped and wondered at his beauty. The elder one said, "What a beautiful butterfly I see!" They watched it, and, when it fell upon the floor, the elder sister said to the younger one, "Go catch it, and let us see what it is!" The younger sister was of a cautious and rather suspicious nature, and said that she feared that it might be some being that had been turned into a butterfly, and that it would work to their undoing. The elder replied that there was no danger, as it must surely be a real butterfly. She urged the younger one to catch it. The sister did not care to, and objected four times. The last time the elder sister called the younger one's attention to the fine designs or patterns that adorned its wings. She insisted that they should catch the wonderfully colored animal, so that they could examine the paintings on its wings and utilize them in beautifying their blankets. The younger sister then consented, and they advanced upon it. The elder one tried first. When she was about to catch it, it fluttered away. She followed it and made several attempts, but each time it managed to slip from under her hand. The younger sister then tried and failed. Then both started in pursuit, as by this time they were becoming excited in the chase. The butterfly then crawled and fluttered about the room, and the maidens followed it. The chase increased in intensity and interest. The maidens dashed around the room, but always managed to remain in the shaded area. They finally became so excited that they screamed, in their endeavors to catch the pretty object which always eluded them.

The sun had never shone upon these virgins. They had been told by the chief of the town that they must never go out into the sunlight, nor let the rays of the sun shine upon them through the doorway in the roof. Should the rays of the sun touch even a single part of their bodies they would be put to death. The sun was now directly overhead, and formed an area of light on the floor at the foot of the ladder. The butterfly was aware of the edict of the chief, as the gods had given him full instructions concerning all that he would encounter, and had prepared him for every emergency that might arise. He now decided that the virgins had reached such a high state of excitement that the time had arrived for him to fly into the light. This he did. The maidens were so much interested in their attempt to catch the butterfly that they forgot the penalty that a touch of the sunlight would bring upon them. The elder sister was in the lead. She reached forward to grasp the butterfly, and her hand was thrust beyond it into the rays of the noonday sun. As soon as the bright rays touched her hand, she recalled with fear and trembling the words of the chief. The chase terminated instantly, and the sisters endeavored to console each other. The butterfly continued to crawl about in the sunlit area on the floor. After considering their probable fate, they decided that they would be reported to the chief regardless of future actions, and finally agreed to make another attempt to catch the fascinating insect. They were determined to catch the butterfly, and together they made a dash into the sunlight. The butterfly began to mount higher and higher on the steps of the ladder, until it reached the top. The virgins followed step by step; but, at the moment that both reached the top and were about to grasp the butterfly, it changed into a very handsome young man. He feigned disapproval, and asked the maidens why they were endeavoring to catch him. The virgins were amazed, and could not answer him. He talked to them for some time before they recovered enough to reply. Then the virgins told the Butterfly-Man that he had taken advantage of them, and had caused their curiosity to lead them into sin by breaking the laws of the city. They told him that only a bad man would do such a thing. He replied that he was not bad, nor had he intended to harm them in any way; on the contrary, he had come to release them from their life of darkness, in order that they might see the beauties of the world, — the butterflies in great numbers, sipping the honey from countless flowers; the beautiful birds, that filled the trees with song, and the air with flashes of color; the wonderful lakes, in which were mirrored the sun-tinted clouds at sunset and the rainbow after the storm; in fact, all the wonders of nature that had been denied them for so many years. Words were, however, meaningless and hollow to their bewildered senses; and they bemoaned their fate, saying that these wonders were not for them, as they would be reported and put to death for their disobedience. The Butterfly-Man

listened to their wailings, and knew full well that they would not return to their house again, and therefore told them that they had better go back. "To retrace our steps," said they, "would be to go to certain death. Now that you have wronged us, use whatever power you may have, and endeavor to save us, we implore you!" The Butterfly-Man felt sorry for the maidens, but was at the same time greatly pleased to think that he had been successful. The rainbow now appeared, according to his plans; and he used his magic power bestowed upon him by the gods, and rendered them as well as himself invisible. They then stepped upon the rainbow and travelled to the last village of the birds, — the place from which he had started on his journey when he was on his way to the home of the virgins. On reaching this place, he transformed all into the forms of the birds of the village, and they passed through in safety. In each of the other three bird villages they changed into the bird forms, and finally reached the house of the Butterfly-Man. When they entered the house, it loomed upon their vision as a spacious palace. It had been transformed during the absence of the owner, and it was now a beautiful dwelling.

In the new surroundings the Butterfly-Man looked upon the elder sister, and realized more than ever before that she was a beautiful maiden. She was covered with a garment of richest turquoise. The younger sister was no less comely, and was enveloped in a gown of pure white shell. The name of the sisters was Dō'bedēklād, which means "Not shone upon by the sun." They, in their turn, looked upon their rescuer, and saw that he was a youth whose beauty was in keeping with his home.

When they reached the house, it was dusk; and on entering a room, they found that all of the gods were present. The materials for the wedding ceremony had been prepared, and were now in waiting. The ceremony was enacted without delay, the gods presided, and even the Sun was present as a witness. The Butterfly-Man married both maidens, and after the ceremony the gods departed. The morning after the ceremony, when they awoke, they found themselves in the old feather house and in the feather bed that had been used by the Butterfly-Man when he was a single man. He had changed greatly also. His beauty had faded with the night. He had changed with the changing of his house. The brides still retained their beauty, and were disgusted when they saw their surroundings, and realized that such a change had taken place in their husband. They could do nothing, however; and when breakfast-time came, the Butterfly-Man went out to kill larks, as there was no other food in the house. He took the larks home and roasted them on grease-wood-twigs before the fire. He told his wives that he would cook the birds, and they could eat them as they came from the fire. The girls did not care to eat; but the husband insisted, and they consented to taste the meat. They merely tasted it, and then put it aside. They had been used to corn-pollen made into a mush, and had never seen a bird

before, let alone eaten one. They were disgusted with such coarse fare, and would not eat it. Some time elapsed, and the brides grew more and more hungry. At last they were compelled to eat the birds or starve. They became dissatisfied with this mode of life, and regretted that they had left their old home. They wanted to go back. They realized that punishment awaited them should they ever return, yet they longed to get away. The husband told them that he would let them go, but only for a short time. He told them that, should they return to stay, they would be put to death, and that they had better make it a mere visit. He hoped that they would not care to go under these conditions, but, finding that they were determined, he invoked the help of the gods, and through their help gave his wives the power to annihilate the people of the village should they offer violence. The power bestowed upon them was the possession of and ability to use the "Big Hail." He gave them four pieces of the "Big Hail," two for each. He told the elder sister to follow the actions of her people when they were about to enter the village, and, should they become hostile, she was to throw down one of the hail-stones. This would cause the "Black Cloud" to appear, and it would spread over the surface of the earth. Immediately after the "Black Cloud" appeared the younger sister was to throw down one of hers, which would cause a heavy rain. Then the elder sister was to throw down her second one, thereby bringing the "Thunders" and the storm of the "Little Hail." The fourth one, held by the younger sister, was to be thrown at this time, and it would carry destruction in its path to all who had escaped the anger of the other elements.

The wives assumed an invisible form and started on the "Rainbow" (some say on the down of a live eagle-feather), and were carried to the outskirts of their city. Here they assumed their natural forms and proceeded on foot toward their former home. They had not gone far when they came upon several people working in the fields. In one of the groups there was an ugly old man. He saw and recognized them. He began to yell, and called them by name, then rushed through the village shouting to all that the sisters Dō'bedēklād were returning. The people became excited and ran toward them. As they ran, they pulled up reeds with which to beat the sisters. The people soon formed a great throng, and each one carried a reed. They closed in upon the defenceless girls in the form of a circle, and then began to beat them. The sisters cried and begged to be spared; but the people replied that they had violated the sacred laws of the city, and that they would therefore have to beat them to death. The sisters were wearing their turquoise and shell dresses, but these did not protect them, and they soon began to bleed from the cruel cuts made by the reeds. After a time the dresses fell apart, and the shell and turquoise pieces dropped to the ground. They had forgotten about the power that lay within the pellets of the "Big Hail." When their garments fell, they remembered their power,

and the elder sister said that they should exert it. The younger replied that it should be done quickly or they would be killed. The elder sister threw down the first "Big Hail," and the Black Cloud appeared and rolled down upon the earth. The younger sister threw the second "Big Hail," and the rain fell in torrents. The elder sister then released the third "Big Hail," and the Thunders roared and the "Little Hail" crashed down upon the earth. The younger sister now dropped the fourth "Big Hail," which carried destruction in the form of a storm of big hail accompanied with bolts of lightning. The hail-stones were so great in size that none of the people escaped save those who reached the houses before the last "Big Hail" was thrown. The majority of the people were killed, and their bodies almost covered the ground upon which the battle had taken place. The storm soon abated, and the sisters saw the ground strewn with the bodies of their friends and relatives. They were overcome with grief and pity. The people who had taken refuge in the houses came forth and begged to be forgiven. The sisters granted their appeals, and they then started for their old home. They met other people that they knew, and made peace with them. The old house was soon reached, and the sisters entered it and remained for some time before returning to their husband. When they went back to the Butterfly-Man, they decided to live with him and be satisfied with his food. After reaching the feather house, they lived contented for a time, and then decided that they should have a larger and better house. They started out to search for a better place for a home, and reached a certain locality to the eastward of their former abode. Here they quarrelled. The sisters were greatly distressed concerning this new phase of their married life, and one of them decided that she did not care to live if such was to be the life that was before her. She went to a spring and lowered herself into it. The ledge on which she stood caused the water to reach a point just below her chin. She called to her husband; and when he came, she said to him, "Look at me once more." She waded out until the water reached only to her waist. The husband was so surprised that he did not know what to do. As he looked, she began to sink. Lower and lower she went, and soon disappeared beneath the surface of the waters. She was seen no more. The remaining sister disappeared in a similar manner, and the husband wandered about sad and disconsolate. He constantly recalled his past life, and finally related it to some being, some Dene, who has handed it down to the present.¹

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY,
NEW YORK CITY.

¹ This myth, chanted in form of a song, is used by the medicine-men in curative ceremonies. It is used especially when a person is under the spell of some bad man, when a person has been bewitched, or when he is under a spell from some such cause. There is no sand-painting used in this ceremony, unless there should be one used by the Butterfly-Man.